

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 14-16 and 18-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102; and claim 17 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103. Applicants believe that the rejections are improper for at least the reasons set forth below.

In the Office Action, claims 14-16 and 18-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 in view of Japanese Patent Publication No. 2000-194736 ("Yasumitsu"). In response, Applicants do not believe that the Patent Office can rely on Yasumitsu. In this regard, the earliest effective prior art date of this reference is its publication date, namely July 14, 2000. Indeed, the earliest effect filing date of the present application is April 19, 2000 based on the filing of priority Japanese Patent Application No.P2000-117849 and thus predates the earliest effective prior art date of the reference. Therefore, Yasumitsu should be precluded as prior art, and moreover, Applicants believe that the claimed invention is distinguishable from Yasumitsu. Based on at least these reasons, Applicants believe that Yasumitsu fails to anticipate the claimed invention.

Accordingly, the anticipation rejection of claims 14-16 and 18-26 should be withdrawn.

In the Office Action, claim 17 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 in view of Yasumitsu and U.S. Patent No. 5,418,712 ("Miwa"). At the outset, the Yasumitsu reference should be precluded as prior art as discussed above and thus the obviousness rejection should be withdrawn for at least these reasons. Moreover, even if properly combinable, Applicants believe that the claimed invention is distinguishable from the cited art. Based on at least these reasons, Applicants believe that the cited art fails to render obvious the claimed invention.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the obviousness rejection of claim 17 be withdrawn.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance and earnestly solicit reconsideration of same.

Respectfully submitted,

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